

Muhammad 'Ali (1769–1849)

laws, and lynchings. Along with his fellow migrants, he discovered that racism was still a problem in the North, including his new home of Detroit, Michigan. His acute sensitivity to racism drew him to Wali Fard Muhammad's uniquely racial formulation of Islam. When Poole, renamed Elijah Muhammad, assumed the leadership of Fard Muhammad's Nation of Islam after the latter's disappearance in 1934, the racial problems of the United States completely infused the new leader's political thought and his understanding of Islam.

According to the teachings of Fard Muhammad that Elijah Muhammad developed over four decades, the original humanity was black. Some 6,600 years ago, one of their number, the diabolical genius named Mr. Yakub, set up a 600-year eugenics program to breed the evil white race. It was prophesied that this race would rule the world for 6,000 years. Although their evil ways were held in check for 1,000 years by the coming of the Prophet Muhammad, eventually they escaped the land of their banishment, Europe, and conquered and pillaged the rest of the nonwhite world. The greatest evil that the whites perpetrated was to capture Africans and enslave them in the Americas. In so doing, they robbed these blacks of their identities, including their natural language (Arabic) and their innate religion (Islam). They remained "lost" for 400 years under the white devil until Allah came in the person of Fard Muhammad to rescue this "Lost-Found Nation of Islam."

Given that his movement was conceived of as a nation, Elijah Muhammad had a fairly active political agenda. His political thought can be summarized by the slogan "Do for self." For him, this meant complete independence from whites: socially, religiously, economically, politically, and territorially. For example, blacks were not to befriend, much less intermarry with, their enemy. Christianity was a creation of whites to enslave blacks by teaching them to wait for justice in the hereafter and to worship a "white, blue-eyed" god. Instead, they should follow their innate religion, Islam. His economic program included Nation of Islam-owned farms, grocery stores, and restaurants. Elijah Muhammad taught his followers that the American government served only the interests of the whites, and it actively sought to control and destroy nonwhites. So he and his followers refused to vote or fight in its wars. Elijah Muhammad also demanded that the American government make reparations for slavery by giving African Americans a number of contiguous states within the continental United States. This was not just segregation but complete separation.

While Elijah Muhammad's "do for self" agenda was in some respects politically active, in other respects, he can be seen as advocating political quietism. His followers were told not to vote, because to participate in the political process was to be an "Uncle Tom." He saw the quest for civil rights and integration led by Martin Luther King Jr. (1929–68) as not only pointless but also dangerous. Despite his creation of the Fruit of Islam, a group of Nation of Islam's zealous young males trained in combat for self-defense, Elijah Muhammad repeatedly forbade the use of violence

and the carrying of arms. Malcolm X (1925–65) became particularly frustrated by this lack of direct political action. Yet Elijah Muhammad maintained that the destruction of white society and its political structures would not come from him or through his followers' actions (violent or otherwise). The apocalyptic battle that would destroy white rule would be fought by Allah himself. Elijah Muhammad's duty was to prepare his followers to be independent and to separate them from whites lest they be destroyed by Allah along with whites.

Elijah Muhammad's movement was quickly reformed after his death in 1975. Under the leadership of his youngest legitimate son Warith Deen Mohammed (1933–2008), his vision of Islam and his racial political agenda were abandoned in favor of a more traditionally Sunni formulation. Nevertheless, Elijah Muhammad was enormously influential among African Americans. Long before slogans such as "black pride" and "black power" came into vogue, he not only advocated them but also effectively put them into practice.

See also Malcolm X (1925–65); Mohammed, W. D. (1933–2008); Nation of Islam; slavery

Further Reading

Herbert Berg, *Elijah Muhammad and Islam*, 2008; Claude Andrew Clegg III, *An Original Man: The Life and Times of Elijah Muhammad*, 1997; Elijah Muhammad, *Message to the Blackman in America*, 1965 (repr. 1992)

HERBERT BERG

Muhammad 'Ali (1769–1849)

Muhammad 'Ali, or more formally Muhammad 'Ali Pasha (Mehmed Ali), was an energetic and ambitious Ottoman governor of Egypt from 1805 to 1848. During his long career, he augmented Egypt's wealth, introduced long-lasting changes to its society, and embarked on an expansionist policy that gravely threatened the Ottoman Empire. Due to European opposition, however, the mini-empire he had founded had to be dismantled; in exchange, the Ottoman sultan granted him hereditary rule of Egypt.

Born in 1769 in the Macedonian town of Kavala, Muhammad 'Ali was dabbling in the tobacco trade when, in 1801, he joined an irregular military force that the Ottoman sultan dispatched to Egypt to evict the French army that had occupied the country three years earlier. Following the French evacuation in 1801, Muhammad 'Ali seized effective control of Cairo and forced the sultan in Istanbul to appoint him officially as governor of Egypt with the title of pasha in 1805.

Muhammad 'Ali moved fast to consolidate his control over Egypt by inviting many friends and relatives to settle in his new country

and appointing them in key positions within the provinces. Next, he moved to curtail the power of the merchants and the 'ulama' (religious scholars) by forcing some into exile and confiscating the property of others. He also put some of his opponents under house arrest. His decisive consolidation of power came in March 1811, when he invited rival warlords, Mamluks, to his citadel and had them massacred.

Gradually, Muhammad 'Ali imposed a monopoly over the sale of a large number of locally produced agricultural commodities. He then entered into negotiations with European merchants who had to deal with him and him alone if they wanted to trade with Egypt. Furthermore, throughout his second decade in power, he undertook a complete overhaul of the agricultural sector: he raised new taxes, conducted a thorough land survey, and ordered huge infrastructural projects the scale of which had not been seen in Egypt for centuries.

Aware of Istanbul's desire to dislodge him from power in Egypt, he attempted to raise troops from the Sudan in 1818. When these attempts proved unsuccessful, he started conscripting peasants from the Egyptian countryside in 1820 to 1821 and quickly appointed European officers to train the peasant soldiers. Conscription waves spread throughout the country, and within ten years the army reached the impressive figure of 130,000 troops. Numerous institutions were founded to supply this army with all its needs. Schools for infantry, cavalry, and artillery were opened to train army officers. These were followed by schools for metallurgy and agriculture. A number of "manufactories" were also founded to supply the army with uniforms, footwear, headgear, guns, and ammunition. A large educational hospital was opened that trained doctors and surgeons needed for the different regiments. A printing machine that had been founded in 1820 started printing military and medical books.

Using these well-trained troops, Muhammad 'Ali grudgingly lent a helping hand to the sultan in his fight against his Greek subjects who had broken out in a nationalist revolt in 1820. After initial successes that his army had achieved against the Greek rebels, a naval force of the British, French, and Russian navies sank the combined Egyptian-Ottoman fleet in Navarino Bay in October 1827.

Following the Greek debacle, the pasha resolved not to get embroiled in the sultan's struggles. In 1831, he even invaded Syria to establish a buffer area between his power base in Egypt and the sultan's in Anatolia. His troops faced ineffective resistance and soon crossed into Anatolia and gravely threatened Istanbul itself. Alarmed at his vassal's surprise advance, the Ottoman sultan sought help from Britain, and when this did not materialize, he turned to the Russians, who were only too eager to interfere in Ottoman affairs. In time, the British saw the pasha's bid for independence and expansionist policies as undermining the peace in Europe and seriously threatening their interests in Asia. In 1840, they convened a European conference in London that forced the pasha to withdraw from Syria, southern Anatolia, Crete, and Arabia. Finally, in 1841, the Ottoman sultan further limited

Muhammad 'Ali's power by issuing a rescript ordering him to reduce the size of his army, but in return the sultan bestowed on him the hereditary rule of Egypt and the Sudan.

Said to be illiterate till the age of 40, Muhammad 'Ali was nonetheless a well-read man. He was in the habit of having his advisors read to him history books as well as European newspapers. He was a keen observer of the contemporary European scene, and despite not having ambassadors in any European capital, he was fairly well informed of the political situation in London, Paris, and St. Petersburg. Besides military training manuals and medical textbooks, the famous printing house he founded in Bulaq printed many Turkish and Arabic translations of European historical books and political biographies, most notably of Catherine the Great and Napoleon Bonaparte. He was also aware of Machiavelli's *The Prince*, although he was not keen on having it published, saying that it had nothing to teach him; he preferred, instead, to read Ibn Khaldun's *Muqaddima* (Prolegomena). Muhammad 'Ali was also curious to learn about Egypt's history and was particularly intrigued by the Pharaonic and the Ptolemaic periods, less so by the Mamluk and Ottoman ones. Above all, he was intimately familiar with Ottoman history and always looked at Istanbul to learn how to run his prized province. Specifically, he was keen to learn how the Ottomans attempted to use law (*qanun*) in order to reinforce their rule by controlling members of the elite and by trading justice to the commoners in exchange for their production of the necessary surplus.

Dubbed as the "Founder of Modern Egypt," Muhammad 'Ali is often depicted as a strong man who stood up against Western imperialism. Having had imperial designs himself, however, it is probably more correct to see his legacy as changing Egypt's relationship with the Ottoman Empire, posing the gravest threat that the Ottoman Empire had faced in its history, instituting long-lasting socioeconomic changes in Egypt, and establishing a dynasty that ruled over Egypt for a hundred years.

See also colonialism; Egypt; Ottomans (1299–1924)

Further Reading

Henry Dodwell, *The Founder of Modern Egypt: A Study of Muhammad Ali*, 1931; Khaled Fahmy, *All the Pasha's Men: Mehmed Ali, His Army and the Making of Modern Egypt*, 1997; Idem, *Mehmed Ali: From Ottoman Governor to Ruler of Egypt*, 2009; Shafik Ghorbal, *The Beginnings of the Egyptian Question and the Rise of Mehmet Ali*, 1828; F. Robert Hunter, *Egypt under the Khedives, 1805–1978: From Household Government to Modern Bureaucracy*, 1984; Fred Lawson, *The Social Origins of Egyptian Expansionism During the Muhammad 'Ali Period*, 1992; Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid Marsot, *Egypt in the Reign of Muhammad Ali*, 1984; Helen Rivlin, *The Agricultural Policy of Muhammad 'Ali in Egypt*, 1961; Judith Tucker, *Women in Nineteenth-Century Egypt*, 1985.

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